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DEPT FOR PRM/MATTHEW R. JOHNSON

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [MK](#)
SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: TEXTBOOKS AND LENDING LIBRARY FOR ROMA
REFUGEE CHILDREN -- APPLICATION FOR FY 2008 PRM JULIA V.

TAFT FUND FOR REFUGEES

REF: STATE 6779

¶1. SUMMARY: Embassy Skopje proposes granting 20,000 USD of the FY 2008 PRM Julia V. Taft Fund for Refugees toward the purchase of school textbooks for 395 Roma refugee children. The textbooks will promote access to education for Roma students for the 2008/9 academic year, and the creation of a lending library of the texts will serve future generations of students. Post proposes to implement the project through the local NGO European Civil Organization (ECO), and has the authority and capacity to award the grant to the implementing organization before the end of the current fiscal year. End Summary.

BENEFICIARIES

¶2. As of January 2008, the Republic of Macedonia has a refugee population of 1,860. Nearly all refugees in Macedonia are of the Roma, Ashkalija and Egyptian (RAE) ethnicity and fled from Kosovo in 1999. The target population for this project is a group of 395 Roma refugee children living the Shuto Orizari neighborhood who are seeking to enroll or continue in school for the 2008/9 academic year. This population will be served by a new refugee educational/community center, modeled on the success of a similar center in another Skopje neighborhood. Beneficiaries will not be limited to the 395 Roma students expected to enroll for the 2008/9 academic year, as the lending library of required textbooks will also benefit future generations of students.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

¶3. Difficulties facing Roma refugee children undermine their access to education. Lack of textbooks, tuition and transportation costs, lack of clothing, and difficult living situations and study environments often act as barriers to educational access among the refugee Roma population. Last year the Government of Macedonia approved a new work plan for developing an integration strategy for refugees in the country. Education is a key component of the local integration of refugees.

¶4. Under the umbrella of a larger educational/community center, this project aims to eliminate the "textbook barrier," increasing access to education among refugee children through the acquisition of required school text books and the creation of a lending library for primary and secondary school students in the under-served Shuto Orizari neighborhood. With the assistance of UNHCR and NGOs including the European Civil Organization (ECO), Sumnal and the Red Cross of the City of Skopje, the new educational/community center will address a number of the other barriers to education, including tuition fees, school readiness, clothing, and adequate nutrition for the 2008/9

academic year. However, UNHCR funding is not sufficient to address the prevailing problem of a lack of textbooks for the 2008/9 academic year. Thus, Post proposes to close this gap in funding through a grant from the FY 2008 Julia V. Taft Fund for Refugees.

¶5. Post will implement this grant through the European Civil Organization (ECO) of Skopje, a local NGO implementing partner working closely with UNHCR on Roma refugee projects. ECO's staff of five persons has been integral in the development of the educational/community center and in creating and implementing projects and strategies for improving access to education and academic achievement among the Roma refugee population. ECO has signed a code of conduct to implement UNHCR projects that is consistent with the standards set out by the UN Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC). Post can provide a copy of the signed code of conduct.

¶6. ECO will work with the local schools to determine the final list of books required by students in each grade for the 2008/9 academic year, and will, on the basis of competitive bidding, select a publishing company from which to purchase the required textbooks. The funding would cover 395 sets of required textbooks for students from kindergarten through high school, with the largest number of students in grades 1-8. In order to obtain textbooks, parents will be required to sign a statement committing to return the textbooks to ECO at the end of the academic year, allowing the books to be used for the next generation of students. Books will initially be distributed at the new educational/community center in Shuto Orizari, and the lending library also will be housed there.

¶7. Post intends to maximize public diplomacy opportunities related to the project, through press releases and press coverage of the distribution of the books, including possible participation of the Ambassador and other Post representatives at a kick-off event at the new educational/community center. Post will also seek public diplomacy opportunities when a lending library is created from returned text books at the end of the 2008/9 academic year.

¶8. The proposed project would fill a critical funding gap that hinders access to education among Roma refugees in Macedonia. Since education is a key component of local integration of refugees, assistance from the Julia V. Taft Fund for Refugees would both aid in improving educational access and achievement among Roma refugees, and also assist the Government of Macedonia in making important progress toward integrating refugees. Therefore, Post requests 20,000 USD from FY 2008 PRM Julia V. Taft Fund for Refugees funding to implement this project.

Milovanovic